

South Carolina Department of Social Services
Child Welfare Quality Assurance Review: Greenville County

This report describes the results of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) Greenville County Quality Assurance Review, conducted June 3-7, 2013.

DSS Child Welfare Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted using the *Onsite Review Instrument* (OSRI) finalized by the federal Administration for Children & Families (ACF) in July 2008. This instrument is used to review foster care and family preservation services cases.

The OSRI is divided into three sections: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. There are two safety outcomes, two permanency outcomes, and three well-being outcomes. Reviewers collect information on a number of *items* related to each of the outcomes. The ratings for each *item* are combined to determine the rating for the outcome. Outcomes are rated as being substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable. The *items* are rated as *strength*, *area needing improvement*, or not applicable. Ratings for each of the outcomes are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Child Welfare QA Onsite Reviews – Ratings by Outcome

Outcome	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
Safety 1 <i>Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected from Abuse and Neglect</i>	91% (19)	9% (2)	0% (0)
Safety 2 <i>Children are Safely Maintained in their Homes whenever Possible and Appropriate</i>	55% (22)	22.5% (9)	22.5% (9)
Permanency 1 <i>Children have Permanency and Stability in their Living Situations</i>	40% (8)	55% (11)	5% (1)
Permanency 2 <i>The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children</i>	50% (10)	45% (9)	5% (1)
Well-Being 1 <i>Families have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for their Children's Needs</i>	53% (21)	37% (15)	10% (4)
Well-Being 2 <i>Children receive Appropriate Services to meet their Educational Needs</i>	88% (15)	6% (1)	6% (1)
Well-Being 3 <i>Children receive Adequate Services to meet their Physical and Mental Health Needs</i>	48% (18)	26% (10)	26% (10)

Results for outcomes and *items* are reported by the number of cases and the percentage of total cases given each rating. In addition, the percentage of *strengths* is calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *areas needing improvement*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the *percentage of strengths*.

Forty cases were reviewed including twenty foster care and twenty family preservation cases.

SECTION I: REVIEW FINDINGS

Safety Outcome 1: Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected from Abuse and Neglect

Two *items* are included under Safety Outcome 1. Ratings for the two *items* are shown in Table 2.

Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports received during the period under review were initiated and face-to-face contact with the child made, within the timeframes established by agency policies or State statute.

Table 2.

Rating	Item 1	Item 2
<i>Strength</i>	50% (20)	50% (20)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	3% (1)	3% (1)
<i>Not Applicable</i>	47% (19)	47% (19)
Total	100% (40)	100% (40)
<i>% Strengths</i>	95.2% (20)	95.2% (20)

Item 2: Repeat maltreatment

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if any child in the family experienced repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are Safely Maintained in Their Homes Whenever Possible and Appropriate

Two *items* are included under Safety Outcome 2. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 3.

Item 3: Services to family

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or re-entry after a reunification.

Table 3.

Rating	Item 3	Item 4
<i>Strength</i>	50% (20)	58% (23)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	22.5% (9)	42% (17)
<i>Not Applicable</i>	27.5% (11)	0% (0)
Total	100% (40)	100% (40)
<i>% Strengths</i>	69% (20)	57.5% (23)

Item 4: Risk assessment and safety management

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children Have Permanency and Stability in Their Living Situations

Six *items* are included under Permanency Outcome 1. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 4.

Item 5: Foster Care reentries

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether children who entered foster care during the period under review were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Item 6: Stability of foster care placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if the child in foster care is in a stable placement at the time of the onsite review and that any changes in placement that occurred during the period under review were in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s).

Item 7: Permanency goal for child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

Item 8: Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review, to achieve reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner.

Item 9: Adoption

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made, or are being made, to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner.

Item 10: Other planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA)

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure:

- That the child is adequately prepared to make the transition from foster care to independent living (if it is expected that the child will remain in foster care until he or she reaches the age of majority or is emancipated).
- That the child, even though remaining in foster care, is in a “permanent” living arrangement with a foster parent or relative caregiver and that there is a commitment on the part of all parties involved that the child remain in that placement until he or she reaches the age of majority or is emancipated.
- That the child is in a long-term care facility and will remain in that facility until transition to an adult care facility.

Table 4.

Rating	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
<i>Strength</i>	17.5% (7)	33% (13)	33% (13)	17% (7)	8% (3)	5% (2)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	2.5% (1)	17% (7)	17% (7)	5% (2)	20% (8)	0% (0)
Not Applicable	80% (32)	50% (20)	50% (20)	78% (31)	72% (29)	95% (38)
Total	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)
<i>% Strengths</i>	87.5% (7)	65% (13)	65% (13)	77.8% (7)	27.3% (3)	100% (2)

Permanency Outcome 2: The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children

Six *items* are included under Permanency Outcome 2. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 5.

Item 11: Proximity of Foster Care Placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that the child’s foster care placement was close enough to the parent(s) to facilitate face-to-face contact between the child and the parent(s) while the child was in foster care.

Item 12: Placement with siblings

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

Item 13: Visiting with parents & siblings in foster care

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these close family members.

Item 14: Preserving connections

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, tribe, school, and friends.

Item 15: Relative placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

Table 5.

Rating	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15	Item 16
<i>Strength</i>	30% (12)	20% (8)	20% (8)	35% (14)	25% (10)	15% (6)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	2.5% (1)	15% (6)	20% (8)	10% (4)	15% (6)	23% (9)
Not Applicable	67.5% (27)	65% (26)	60% (24)	55% (22)	60% (24)	62% (25)
Total	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)
<i>% Strengths</i>	92.3% (12)	57.1% (8)	50% (8)	77.8% (14)	62.5% (10)	40% (6)

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families Have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for Their Children's Needs

Four *items* are included under Well-Being Outcome 1. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 6.

Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, & foster parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents (both at the child's entry into foster care [if the child entered during the period under review] or on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family, and provided the appropriate services.

Item 18: Child & family involvement in case planning

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made (or are being made) to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

Item 19: Caseworker visits with the child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals.

Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers of the children are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case goals.

Table 6.

Rating	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20
<i>Strength</i>	58% (23)	60% (24)	80% (32)	25% (10)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	42% (17)	33% (13)	20% (8)	53% (21)
Not Applicable	0% (0)	7% (3)	0% (0)	22% (9)
Total	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)	100% (40)
% Strengths	57.5% (23)	64.9% (24)	80% (32)	32.3% (10)

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children Receive Appropriate Services to Meet Their Educational Needs

One *item* is included under Well-Being Outcome 2. Ratings for the *item* are shown in Table 7.

Item 21: Educational needs of child

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

Table 7.

Rating	Item 21
<i>Strength</i>	37.5% (15)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	5% (2)
Not Applicable	57.5% (23)
Total	100% (40)
% Strengths	88.2% (15)

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children Receive Adequate Services to Meet Their Physical and Mental Health Needs

Two *items* are included under Well-Being Outcome 3. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 8.

Item 22: Physical health of child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the physical health needs of the child, including dental health needs.

Item 23: Mental/behavioral health of child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren).

Table 8.

Rating	Item 22	Item 23
<i>Strength</i>	48% (19)	42.5% (17)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	35% (14)	27.5% (11)
Not Applicable	17% (7)	30% (12)
Total	100% (40)	100% (40)
<i>% Strengths</i>	57.6% (19)	60.7% (17)

Summary

Several positives were found with the cases. *Item 10* was identified as a *strength* of the agency; all of the cases reviewed were rated as *strength* with no *area needing improvement* (ANI). This means that for the cases reviewed, the agency made efforts to ensure that youth with a permanency goal of APPLA were adequately prepared to transition (10). Additionally, two family preservation cases and one foster care case had all applicable *items* rated as *strength*; no *items* were rated as *area needing improvement*.

Reviewers identified several concerns. One family preservation case had no *items* rated as *strength*. Another family preservation cases had only one *item* rated as *strength*. *Item 9* had eight of eleven applicable cases rated as *area needing improvement*. *Item 20* had 21 of 31 applicable cases rated as *area needing improvement*.

SECTION II: FOSTER CARE LICENSE REVIEW

As part of the Quality Assurance Review Process in Greenville County, ten Foster Home Licenses were randomly selected from the list of all licenses issued by the county during the period under review. These licenses were reviewed using the *DSS QA Foster Home Licensure Review Instrument*. This instrument consists of three sections. Section One focuses on the issuance of the Initial/Standard License. Section Two focuses on the standard license renewal process. Section Three focuses on agency oversight, data entry, and qualitative issues. Each section of the instrument includes the appropriate agency, state, and federal requirements.

Section One review criteria include the following *items*:

- applications
- autobiography information
- financial information
- child factor's checklists
- initial home assessment studies
- references
- information related to firearms and ammunition in the house
- pet vaccination information
- background checks
- convictions
- required trainings
- medical reports
- fire inspections/re-inspections
- discipline agreements
- disaster preparedness plans
- alternative caregiver forms
- a review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPPS

Section Two review criteria include the following *items*:

- a review of the initial background checks
- convictions
- training hours
- medical reports
- updated home studies
- discipline agreements
- fire inspections and drills
- quarterly home visits
- disaster preparedness plans
- annual firearms location update
- information concerning the alternative caregivers
- safety checks of alternative caregivers
- a review of child protective service allegations
- pet vaccination information
- a review of any regulatory infractions
- a review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPPS

All of the requirements evaluated in Sections One and Two of this instrument must be met for the foster home license to be valid. If any *items* are rated as not met, the foster home license is considered invalid. Federal funds cannot be used for board payments for any foster children in the home during the time the license was invalid. Areas noted as having occurred as required on the assessment are rated as *strengths*. Those *items* that were not met are rated as an *area needing improvement (ANI)*. If the issue is not applicable, it is rated N/A.

Additionally, the percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Results of the review are noted in Table 11.

Section One. One foster care issuance for initial/standard licenses was reviewed. The issuance was rated as *strength* as all of the licensing requirements were met prior to authorization of the initial license.

Section Two. None of the nine cases reviewed were rated as *strength* because not all of the licensing requirements were met prior to authorization of the license renewal. Issues identified in Section Two that led to the rating of *ANI* for all nine cases include:

Table 11. Summary of Ratings for Sections One and Two

Rating	Section One: Initial	Section Two: Renewal
<i>Strength</i>	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0 (0%)	9 (100%)
Total	1 (100%)	9 (100%)
% <i>Strengths</i>	1 (100%)	0 (0%)

Background Checks:

- Central registry, SLED, sex offender registry checks, and/or FBI check were not completed, completed improperly, or were not up to date.
- Files did not contain background checks for alternative caregivers.

Training:

- The completion of required training hours could not be verified due to improper documentation or lack of documentation.
- Individualized/Personalized Training Documentation forms did not have foster parent names listed on them.

Pet Vaccination Records:

- Up-to-date pet vaccinations were not on record.

Fire drills and Inspection:

- Fire inspections were not completed.

Medical:

- The file did not contain an updated medical statement for a foster parent.

Firearms and Ammunition Storage:

- The Foster Home Re-Licensing Assessment Guide section regarding firearms and proper ammunition storage was incomplete.

Section Three. Deficiencies were noted in nine of the ten files reviewed. Deficiencies noted in Section Three may not invalidate the license, but they still require attention and correction by county management. Several issues were identified by the reviewers, including:

Alternative Caregivers:

- An alternative caregiver was not identified.

Training:

- Training hours were not documented using the Individualized/Personalized Instruction Documentation form, nor was it signed by the proper person.

Fire Drills and Inspection:

- Fire inspections were not completed in a timely manner.
- Monthly fire drills were not documented.

Firearms and Ammunition Storage:

- Foster parents did not have ammunition at the time of the review, but the agency should document where the foster parents would store the ammunition if or when it is purchased.

Documentation:

- A request for a waiver license was not initiated for approximately four months following the foster parent's child's 18th birthday.
- Quarterly visits were completed untimely, were not completed at all, or documentation was missing from the file.
- A file did not contain a discipline statement for the re-licensure period.
- A licensing file did not contain a current disaster preparedness plan.

SECTION III: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE SCREEN-OUT REVIEW

A review of ten screened-out allegations was completed to determine whether the reports were appropriately screened out. The reports were randomly selected from the list of reports screened out by the county during the period under review. The *DSS QA Screen-Out Reports Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and eight questions regarding the screened-out decisions and processes (see Table 12).

Table 12. Summary of Item Ratings for Screen-Out Review

	Yes	No	NA	Total
1. Illegal substance use alleged AND reason for safety threatened with harm	0	10	0	10
2. Use of CAPSS and/or other systems for prior involvement	9	1	0	10
3. Use of CAPSS and/or other systems for case related information	9	1	0	10
4. Maltreatment tab in CAPSS completed	9	0	1	10
5. Contact with necessary collaterals prior to screen-out decision	3	1	6	10
6. Another intake referral on same perpetrator and/or child within 12 months	3	7	0	10
7. Intake Supervisor ensured consultation with another supervisory-level authority	0	1	9	10
8. Safety tab in CAPSS completed	8	1	1	10

*Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified. Item #6 does not drive the overall rating.

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for the cases reviewed. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 13.

Table 13. Summary of Ratings for Screen-Outs Review

Rating	Was this case appropriately screened-out?
<i>Strength</i>	8 (80%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	2 (20%)
Total	10 (100%)
% <i>Strengths</i>	8 (80%)

Two cases were rated as *area needing improvement* because procedures were not followed. Issues identified that led to the rating of *ANI* include:

- Prior to making the decision not to investigate a new intake referral, the Intake Supervisor did not ensure that there was consultation with another supervisory-level authority.
- Collateral contacts were not made prior to the decision to screen-out the report.

SECTION IV: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNFOUNDED REPORTS REVIEW

Five unfounded reports were reviewed to determine whether the reports were appropriately unfounded. The five unfounded reports were randomly selected from the list of all reports unfounded by the county during the period under review. The review was conducted using the *DSS QA Unfounded Review Instrument*. This instrument includes a description of the allegation, the risk level assigned to the case at Intake, and three questions (all rated as *yes* or *no*):

- Was the investigation initiated in a timely manner?
- Was an adequate assessment conducted?
- Was the decision to unfound the case appropriate?

Questions rated as *Yes* on the assessment are considered *strengths* and those rated as *No* are considered *area needing improvement* (ANI).

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for each question. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of ANIs. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 14.

Table 14. Summary of Ratings for Unfounded Reports Review

Rating	Was the investigation initiated in a timely manner?	Was an adequate assessment conducted?	Was the decision to unfound the case appropriate?
<i>Strength</i>	5 (100%)	2(40%)	2 (40%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	3 (60%)
Could Not Determine	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)
% <i>Strengths</i>	5 (100%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)

*Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

All five of the cases reviewed had investigations that were initiated in a timely manner. Poor and unacceptable assessments were conducted on three of the five cases reviewed. Three cases were also rated as being inappropriately unfounded. Reasons for inappropriately unfounding the case included:

- The agency did not obtain sufficient evidence to make an informed decision regarding the safety and risk concerns in the home.
- The agency did not assess the home environment.
- The agency did not meet with a mother to gather information.
- A mother refused to submit to a drug screen or allow the screening of her children.
- Allegations were corroborated by the youngest child.
- A mother was not cooperative and had prior agency involvement.
- A safety plan was put into place without the presence of the mother.